



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes – as amended
December 14, 2010 – 7:30pm

Attendance

Commission Members: Daphne Collins (Chair), Philip Plottel (Vice Chair), Jack Leader (Secretary), Jerry Adams, Charles Eisenberg, Jane Ives, Peter Kai Jung Lew

Staff: Amanda Stout (Sr. Economic Development Planner), Bob Rooney (Chief Operating Officer)

Guests: Bill Renke

Absent: Matt Cuddy, Robert Gifford, John Pears, Chris Steele

Agenda Items

1. EDC Business

- Vote on November 9, 2010 Minutes. Motion to approve (6-0) (Eisenberg, seconded by Plottel; Lew arrived after vote taken).

2. Discussion of Mayor's Town Hall Meetings and City Financial Forecast

- Several members attended some of Mayor Setti Warren's series of eight town hall meetings in November. Daphne Collins and Philip Plottel were pleased by the content and tenor of the meetings they attended, noting that the focus was on budget, capital improvements, and infrastructure. Collins noted that "economic development" is one of the five strategies that the Mayor has suggested should be utilized to achieve financial sustainability.
- Mayor Warren is planning to attend the EDC meeting on January 11, 2011 to have a thorough discussion about the City's financial forecast and the role of economic development.

3. Chestnut Hill Square

- On December 6th, the Board of Aldermen voted to approve the Chestnut Hill Square project. On December 8th, the Newton TAB published a guest column by Daphne Collins and Philip Plottel voicing the EDC's support for the project: "A welcome facelift, additional tax revenue and modest mixed-use." EDC members were impressed by the unanimous decision by the Board and noted a change in the City and attitudes toward development. Collins said that the EDC might be called upon to voice support for additional aspects of this project in the months ahead.

4. Needham Street

- Amanda Stout told the EDC that the MIT urban planning graduate students gave their second and final public presentation on "Envisioning Needham Street" on December 2nd and that a final report would be forthcoming. The presentation is posted online at: www.newtonma.gov/business.
- Bob Rooney, the City's Chief Operating Officer, joined the EDC's discussion of the future of Needham Street, specifically mentioning the role of the abandoned rail right-of-way that parallels Needham Street. He said that, at the appropriate time, it might be very useful to have a letter of support from the EDC regarding the development potential of Needham Street and the City's interest in the right-of-way.
- Daphne Collins said that a class of Tufts urban planning graduate students had recently completed a study for a bike path for the Town of Watertown. The project may be useful both as an idea for



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a recreational path and because the students produced a video that was a very effective part of communicating the concept to the community. Watertown Community Path website:
<http://www.ci.watertown.ma.us/index.aspx?NID=602>

5. Feasibility Analysis Working Group

- On November 15th, several EDC members met with Chief Joe LaCroix and Deputy Chief Bruce Proia for a tour of the Fire Department Headquarters and Fire Station #3. Philip Plottel reported that it was a very useful tour and that while there seemed to be little structural damage to the buildings, both buildings are in dire need of renovation and are inefficient for their current uses.
- Plottel explained that the Working Group is examining: the continued use of the site for Fire Department uses; the development of the site as a mixed-use site; the cost of renovating the Headquarters and Station #3; and the cost of updating Station #3, which is currently in substandard condition geometrically (as the bays and doors are too small for most modern fire apparatus). He said that the Excel model that he and Chris Steele have developed will be ready soon. The group noted that the condition/location of the fire headquarters and station are a separate issue from the use of the site and that both are sensitive political issues. Eve Tapper, Chief Planner for Current Planning, is also writing a report about the site.
- Chuck Eisenberg reported that discussions continue to move forward with property owners, City staff, and EDC members regarding the Cypress Street site. He said that John Pears is working on urban design models and Candace Havens is looking at traffic in Newton Centre.

6. Business Improvement District (BID)

- Daphne Collins and Amanda Stout will draft a BID Strategy and will discuss in January.

7. New Business

- Chuck Eisenberg suggested that it would be helpful to have on-hand some basic economic development statistics, such as the GDP of the City and demographic information about businesses and employment in Newton. He was particularly interested from the perspective of the Newton Cultural Alliance, which would like to apply for grants and emphasize the economic impact of cultural facilities and cultural tourism. Amanda Stout said that this information would be useful to have on-hand for other grants and studies that the City might undertake and offered to look into compiling such data.
- The Dukakis Center Economic Development Self-Assessment Tool (EDSAT) was briefly mentioned, and Amanda Stout will keep the EDC informed of next steps.
- Daphne Collins informed that the *Newton Comprehensive Plan* serves as an economic development assessment and priority roadmap, and community comparatives exist in the *Citizen Advisory Group Report*.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Stout, AICP

Sr. Economic Development Planner